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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NATO ADVANCED RESEARCH WORKSHOP ON
ENVIRONMENTAL PSY (U) OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH LONDON
(ENGLAND) W D CRANO 18 JUL 87 ONRL-7-818-C

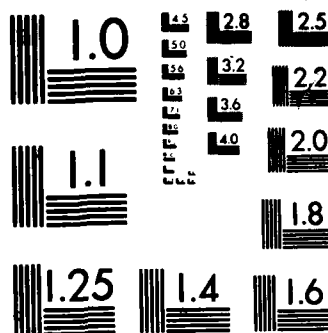
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An Assessment of the NATO Advanced Research
Workshop on Environmental Psychology and Its
Participants

William D. Crano

10 July 1987

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AD-A183135

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited	
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) 7-018-C			7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION US Office of Naval Research Branch Office, London		6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) ONRL	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Box 39 FPO, NY 09510			9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
			TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11 TITLE (Include Security Classification) An Assessment of the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Environmental Psychology and Its Participants				
12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) William D. Crano				
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Conference	13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 19 July 1987	15. PAGE COUNT 5	
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION				
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	Social psychology, Environmental psychology, Applied social psychology -	
05	10			
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)				
<p>This report on the workshop on European social and environmental psychology, held in Lisbon in September 1986, provides a brief summary of the author's reactions to the meeting, along with some observations on the young Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian social researchers represented there. <i>Keywords:</i></p>				
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL C.J. Fox			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (44-1) 409-4340	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL 11

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NATO ADVANCED RESEARCH WORKSHOP ON ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

1 INTRODUCTION

A NATO advanced research workshop on European social and environmental psychology was held in Lisbon from 22 through 26 September, 1986. The term "social and environmental psychology" in the present context is taken to mean applied psychological research that is focused on issues of societal relevance. The all-encompassing nature of this definition presages one of the major weaknesses of the conference (more of this later). However, it also signals one of the aims of the conference organizers, which is to provide guidelines for developing the boundaries of environmental psychology, a developing subdiscipline that increasingly is coming to characterize much European social research.

This report provides a brief summary of my reactions to the NATO meeting, along with some observations on the talented pool of young, southern European social researchers represented there. A more complete picture of the conference will be available in a book of the proceedings, said to contain the best presentations. The book, titled *Environmental Social Psychology*, is now being edited by G.M. Stephenson (University of Canterbury, Kent, UK), G. Jesuino (Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, Lisbon), D. Canter (University of Surrey, Guildford, UK), and L. Soczka (Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil, Lisbon). It will be published by the firm of Martinus Nijhoff of the Netherlands, and will be available by the end of 1987.

2 THE WORKSHOP TECHNIQUE

By the forthcoming publication I am relieved of responsibility for a detailed description of the research discussed in this workshop, and thus, can report on some of my more general reactions to this meeting. It must be stated at the outset that some of the very best social/envi-

ronmental psychologists in Europe attended and presented their work here. The quality of these presentations was first-rate. In addition, at the end of each day, 1 to 2 hours was devoted to a structured discussion of the day's presentations. In these sessions, a discussion leader presented his or her thoughts on the various presentations, usually in as inflammatory a manner as possible, and this opening typically stimulated interesting, and intense, discussion of the day's work. This is a technique that worked to great advantage in the NATO conference, and might be emulated profitably in future scientific meetings.

Young Researchers

In addition to the presence of established scientists, another very positive feature of the conference was the discovery of young, high-quality scientists from the southern European countries. Because most American psychologists do not come into contact with research from the south of Europe, we have a tendency to discount this area as infertile ground for psychological insight and innovation. This is a mistake. The weakness of the southern Europeans, if we may call it such, is one of proficiency in the use of the English language, not in research technique or in the quality of their theoretical vision. In general, northern Europeans are much more facile with English, and as such, less restricted in the conferences they feel comfortable attending, and in the journals in which they publish their research. We are thus exposed with greater frequency to the work of northern European psychologists. Robert Zajonc's work on mere exposure suggests that we tend to value more those people (or things) to whom we are exposed more frequently (Kunst-Wilson and Zajonc, 1980; Moreland and Zajonc, 1977). Applied in the present instance, this hypothesis suggests that because of mere frequency of exposure, we will tend to overvalue northern European psychological research relative to that produced in the south, independent of any differences in quality of research. It is important to keep this possibility in mind,

along with the obvious observation that a lack of proficiency in English should not be confused with lack of scientific expertise.

The Portuguese. My impressions of the young southern European researchers, gained over the course of this conference and in subsequent visits, suggest to me that there is a great wealth of talent in this geographical area which bears close scrutiny. Though relatively few in number, I found the young Portuguese psychologists to be extremely well trained methodologically and, at the same time, to exhibit the typical European concern for the role and importance of theory in the development of their research questions. Their obvious respect for empiricism, combined with a strong theoretical orientation, is an ideal combination. Research of the young Portuguese (and their mentors) is typically based on a multifactorial analysis of variance model. The research is characterized by very "tight" designs, even though much of it is conducted in the field. These researchers take seriously, perhaps even literally, the rules for proper experimental design; they respect the necessity for randomization in true experiments; they are comfortable with multifactorial experimental designs; and they produce research of high internal and external validity. As an old-line research methodologist, the Portuguese approach does my heart good.

Substantively, the young Portuguese researchers focused on two distinct issues at this workshop. Much effort was devoted to the investigation of the workplace, with researchers discussing their studies of the effects of automation and the organization of work; intergroup conflict, especially in times of an attenuation of resources; relative deprivation; and stress (in this instance, in a military context). A second broad focus was on what might loosely be described as group identity or stereotyping. In this general thematic area were papers concerned with national identity and with views and attitudes toward "outsiders" (i.e., other nationalities either contiguous with, or distant from, Portugal's

national borders). Also included in this group was an interesting ethnographic study of the children of a shanty town in Lisbon, and the manner in which the inhabitants of this town related to members of the "other" (somewhat more mainstream) culture.

The Italians. The young Italian social researchers appear to be somewhat more field oriented in their approach, depending more than their Portuguese counterparts upon recent advances in structural equation modeling in constructing their research questions, and in developing the analytic framework for their designs. They are extremely sophisticated users of multivariate techniques. Substantively, they appear to be most interested in research applied to contemporary social problems. Their applied orientation renders their research somewhat less theoretically based than that of the Portuguese, but nonetheless of very high technical quality. At times, however, the lack of theoretical linkage can leave one wondering about the "place" of the research in the more general scientific landscape. If these young researchers paid somewhat more attention to the theoretical foundations and implications of their work, this problem would diminish considerably. In addition to providing a context for understanding the research results, a more concentrated theoretical vision would also suggest more surely the logical "next step" in the investigative cycle, pointing to the directions that are most likely to pay scientific dividends.

Substantively, the Italian researchers focused principally on the psychology of work and unemployment. How youngsters viewed work, what it means to be unemployed, etc., was a central focus of the Italians at this meeting. In addition, the researchers were able to turn their sophisticated multivariate techniques, which characterized the Italian approach to the investigations of work and unemployment, to the study of interaction patterns in a large urban setting. The manner in which age, socioeconomic status, sex, and other demographic realities influence the ways that people interact

with their home environment was analyzed through the combination of a number of very sophisticated analyses, and the ensuing results were fascinating.

The Spanish. On the basis of this conference, it is difficult to comment on the (scientific) developmental status of young Spanish investigators, since only one Spanish presentation was made in the workshop. Whether this was because the Portuguese did not invite, or the Spanish did not accept, is not known, and perhaps not important. In some ways, this conference is illustrative of the relationship, or lack thereof, between Portuguese and Spanish psychologists. The term "benign neglect" seems best to characterize the general interactional pattern between psychologists of these two developing groups. When I queried a Portuguese colleague about this, he stated, somewhat ruefully, "We have a saying in Portugal regarding our relationship with Spain: 'We stand together--back to back'." This is a sad state of affairs. It is clear that each group has much to gain from interactions with the other. Among other reasons, the Portuguese should be more firmly connected with their Spanish counterparts because they do not appear to have a sufficient number to form the "critical mass" necessary for accelerated progress. Portuguese social/environmental psychologists are trained only in Lisbon, Oporto, and Evora. There is a need for a much larger cadre of Portuguese psychologists to facilitate mutual support and stimulation, whose ultimate end-product is good research.

The young Spanish psychologists, much more numerous, could make considerable use of the contact with their nearby Portuguese peers, with the different insights they bring to psychological questions, the opportunities for cross-national studies, etc. Both groups are intensely interested in understanding the psychological processes involved in group identity, conflict, stereotyping, etc. For Spanish psychologists, neighboring Portugal seems to afford a natural arena for cross-national comparative research implicated in these concerns. Of course, while past history can, and does in this

instance, exercise a considerable influence on the likelihood of future interactions, I am hopeful that initiatives from this office might be used to promote a change for the better in Spanish-Portuguese interaction patterns. It is clear to me that each, in some very important senses, needs the other--they simply do not know it yet.

3 WORKSHOP IDENTITY PROBLEMS

My most critical observation on the workshop concerns the relative lack of emphasis placed on the accumulation of knowledge or information from session to session, or even within sessions. The conference suffered considerably because its theme--European environmental/social psychology--was so broad that it could not support the weight of the presentations. There was a lack of coherence in the conference as a whole which diminished its overall value as a vehicle for scientific advance, a central goal of the NATO science workshop program. A consideration of the conference schedule, included at the end of this report, will illustrate this point. As shown, the first day's theme was focused on work and employment. Some very good papers were presented in this session; indeed, the Italian contributions formed the foundation for my earlier report on the psychological effects of unemployment in Italy (ESN 41-6:287-291 [1987]). By the second day, however, the interconnectedness of presentations, both between and within sessions, began to falter. The two talks presented in the plenary session, while of great interest and high quality, had little to do with one another, and this lack of connectedness was evident (though to a lesser degree) in the papers presented in the parallel sessions that followed. Much the same can be said of the presentations of the remaining days of the workshop: high-quality presentations, whose overall impact was diminished by the failure of the conference organization to serve as a "scientific cauldron," in which the methods and findings of one paper somehow mix with, or accumulate with those of others to produce implications or hypotheses that are unavailable

when considering a single piece of research in isolation.

Perhaps it is unfair to expect that the presentations would combine in such a way that the work of one would inform the work of the other participants, since most conferences fail to achieve this state. However, given the range of talent represented in this workshop, and the intrinsically interesting topics treated, one had hoped for more than merely a set of very good papers. Perhaps the edited volume by Stephenson et al. will produce the cumulative effect that I had hoped would ensue from the conference.

4 REFERENCES

- Kunst-Wilson, W.R., and R.B. Zajonc, "Affective Discrimination of Stimuli that Cannot Be Recognized," *Science*, 207 (1980), 557-558.
- Moreland, R.L., and R.B. Zajonc, "Exposure Effect May Not Depend on Stimulus Recognition," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37 (1971), 1085-1089.

5 APPENDIX

Plenary Session

Work, Employment, and Organization

- George W. England (US). An Exploration of Work Meaning. Variables in Germany, Japan, and US.
- Augusto Palmerari and Guido Sarchielli (IT). Images of Work in the Pre-Entry Phase of Occupational Socialization.

Parallel Sessions

Meaning of Work and Organizational Culture

- J. Miguez and J. Keating (POR). Automation and Work Organization.
- S. Lee (UK). Social Psychological Aspects of Computer Mediated Communication Systems in the European Context.
- N.P. Sheehy and A.J. Chapman (UK). Conversing with Data Bases in Automated Office Environments.
- G. Breakwell (UK). Social Beliefs about New Technology.

Work Socialization and Employment

- L. Mannetti and G. Tanucci (IT). Meaning of Work in Young People.

- M. Depolo and G. Sarchielli (IT). Social Representation of Unemployment in Young People.

- J.S. Gambard (RFG). Unemployment and Social Behavior.

- J.T. Haworth (UK). Work, Leisure, and Non-Employment.

Plenary Session

- D. Canter (UK). Putting Situations in Their Places: Foundations for a Bridge Between Social and Environmental Psychology.

- G. Jahoda (UK). Awareness of Supra-National Groupings.

Parallel Sessions

Group Identities and Intergroup Relations

- G. Vinsonneau (FR). Social Categories and the Interiorization of Negative Self-Image in Young Immigrants in France.

- P. Weinreich (UK). The Operationalization of Identity Theory in Racial and Ethnic Relations.

- L.G. Marques and J.P. Oliveira (POR). National Identities and Levels of Categorization: Self-Stereotypes, Attitudes and Perceptions of Other Nationalities.

- C. Deschamps and W. Doise (STZ). Semblables ou Différents: Les Jeunes Immigrés Dans le Contexte Scolaire Genevois.

- J. Extra (NIH). Increasing and Reducing Social Inequality.

- J. Vala, M. Monteiro, and L. Lima (POR). Intergroup Conflicted Relative Deprivation in an Organizational Context: How to Survive to Failure.

- S. Skevington and D.A. Dawkes (UK). Minorities at Work: Men in a Women's World.

- L. Amancio and L. Soczka (POR). Why are Women Discriminated at Work? A Study on Implicit Theories about the Discrimination of Women of Work.

- J. daGlória and J. Baptista (POR). Development of Moral Judgment: The Role of Inferences.

- H. Olearnik (UK). Role of Mass Media and Culture in Support of Threatened Ethnic Identity.

Urban Settings and Social Behavior

- M. Bonnes, M. Mannetti, G. Tannucci, and G. Sechiaroli (IT). Activities and Urban Places Inside a Large Italian Urban Setting.
- M. Lalli (RFG). Dimensions of Urban Identity.
- P. Salmaso and R. Job (IT). That Ugly Place Had a Nice Entrance: Memory for Places and the Things They Contain.
- G. Moser and L. Levy-Leboyer (FR). Inadequate Environment Aggression and Situation Control in Small Towns and Urban Settings.
- F. Askervik-Leherpeux (FR). Mobility and Residential Environment: How to Reduce an Ambiguous Relation.
- M. Morin (FR). Ambiances et Nuisances Sonores: Research on the Social Representation of Noise.
- Van der Wurff and P. Stringer (NTH). Fear of Crime in Residential Surroundings: Integrating Divergent Concepts of Environment.
- H. Brandstätter (AUT). Effects of Weather and Air Pollution on Mood.
- J.A. Corralisa and J. Aragonés (SPA). Assessment of Emotional Environmental Dimensions.
- L. Soczka (POR). Children of Musgueira: A Study on the Social Ecology of a Shanty Town.
- D. Lassare (FR). Pre- and Post-Occupancy Perception of a Residential Environment.

Plenary Session

Coping With the Environment: Personal and Social Strategies

- C. Werner and I. Altman (US). A Transactional Approach to Neighborhood Social Relations.
- L. Griffiths. The Indoor Climate: Energy Conservation, Social Psychological and Biophysical Perspectives.

Parallel Sessions (no topics given)

- J.R. Eiser, J. Van der Pligt, and R. Spears (UK). Local Opposition to the Construction of a Nuclear Power Station: Risk and Rationality.
- P. Stringer (IRL). An Applied Social Psychology of the Environment.
- J.M. Desportes and J.M. Lemaire (FR). The Sizes of Human Groups: An Analysis of Their Distributions.
- W. Stainton Rogers (UK). Cultural Representations of Addiction: Links and Disjunctions Between Perspectives.
- W. Stainton Rogers, R. Stainton Rogers, I. Lowe, and C. Kitzinger (UK). When Social Issues are Multiplexly Represented: Q Methodology, Social Policy, and Participant Democracy.
- J.S. Gabbard (RFG). Crowding and Social Behavior.
- C. Pereira and C. Jesuino (POR). Coping with Stress in a Military Environment.
- V. Linneweber (FRG). Norm Violations in Person X Place Transaction and Social Influence Processes.

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